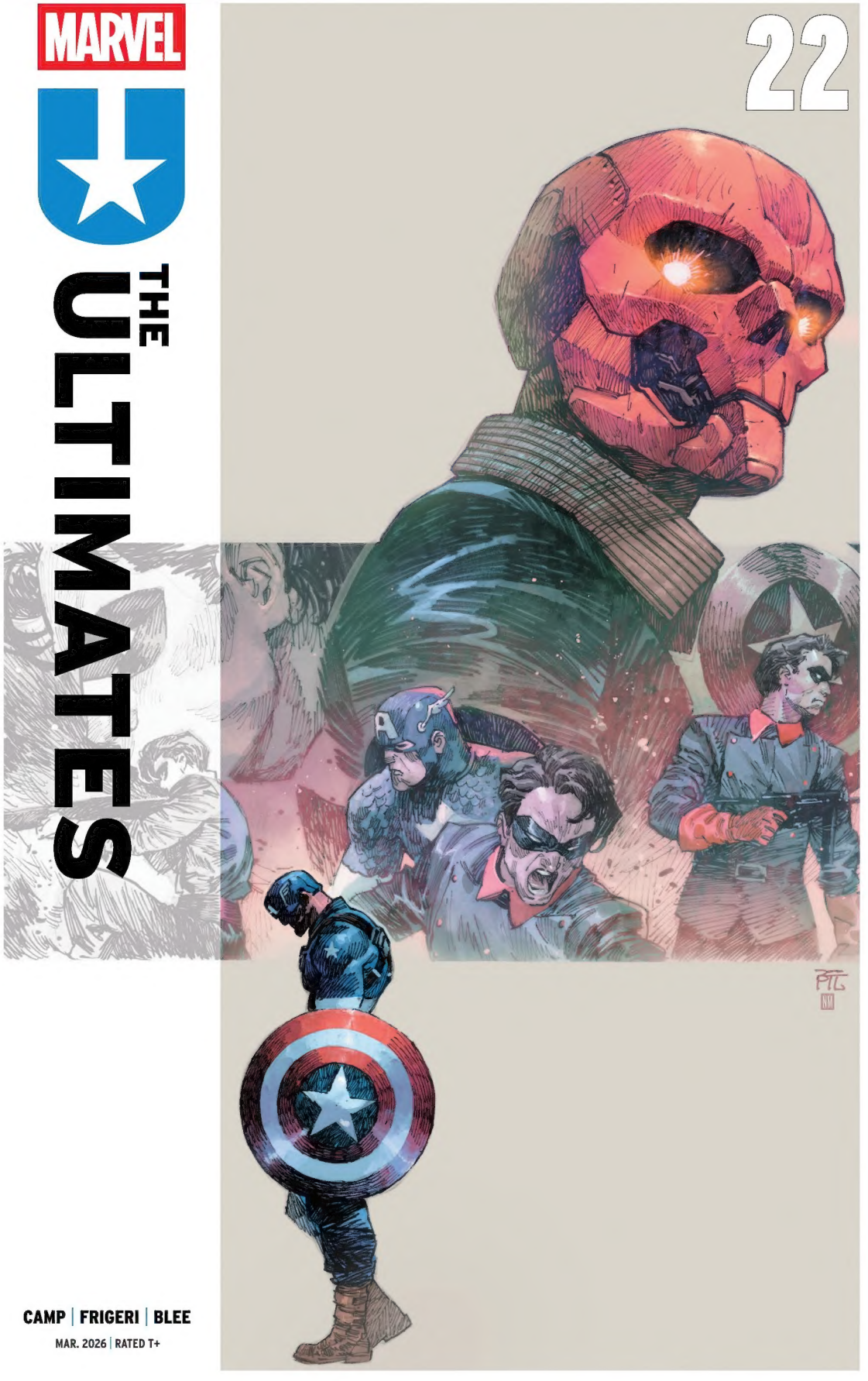
MARVEL

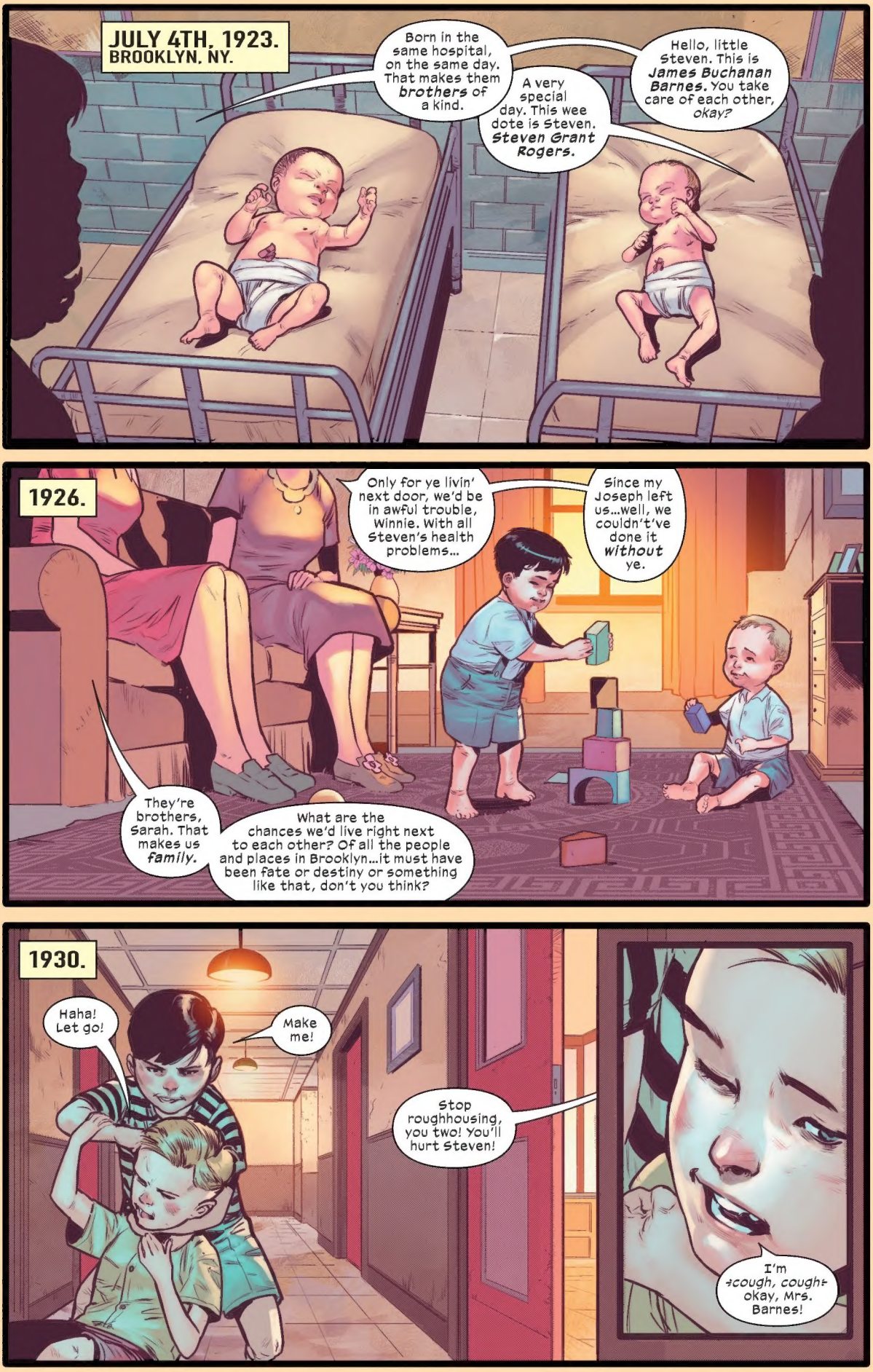
# THE ULTIMATES

22



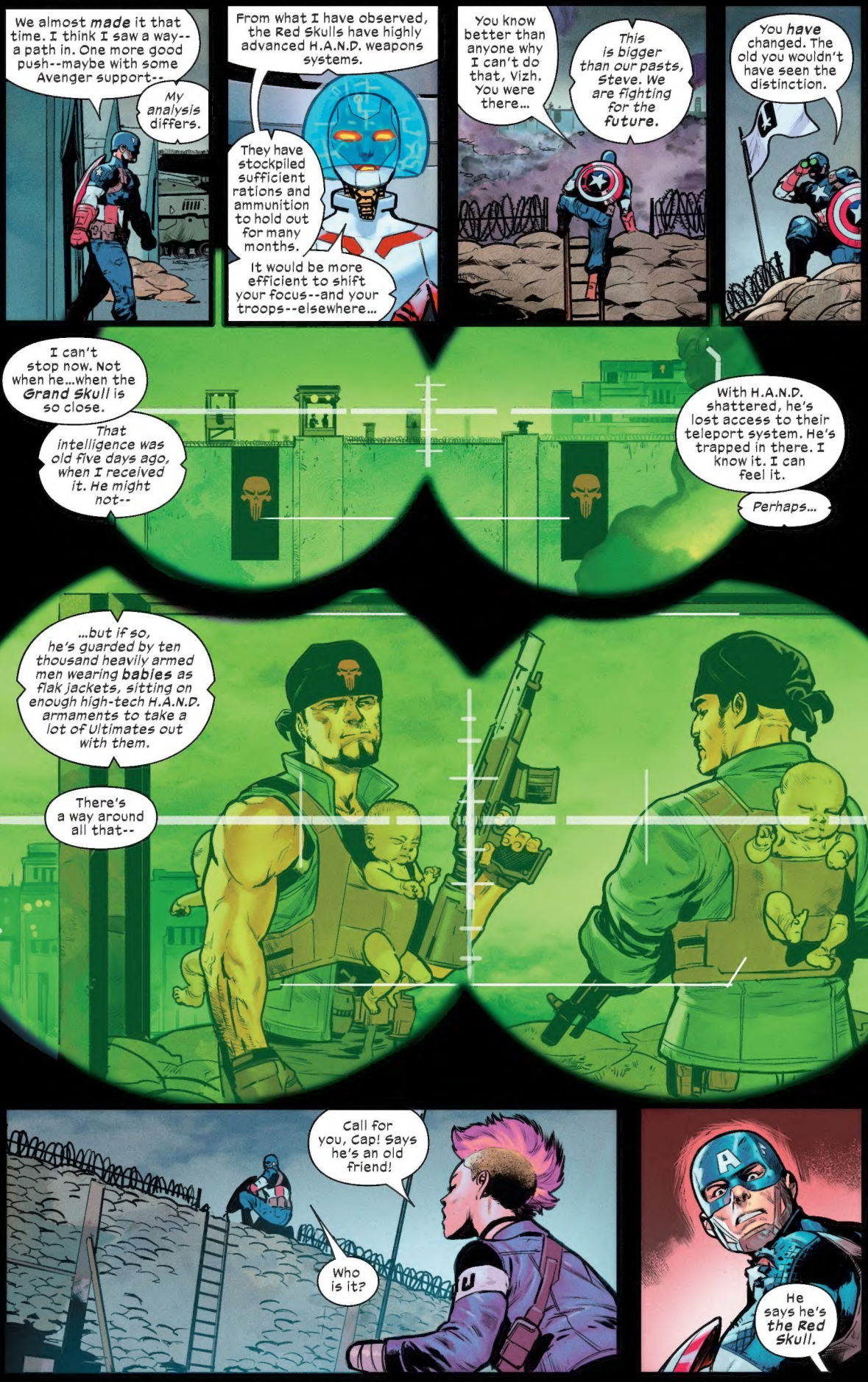
CAMP | FRIGERI | BLEE

MAR. 2026 | RATED T+


JULY 4TH, 1923.
BROOKLYN, NY.
Born in the same hospital, on the same day. That makes them brothers of a kind.
A very special day. This wee dote is Steven. Steven Grant Rogers.
Hello, little Steven. This is James Buchanan Barnes. You take care of each other, okay?
1926.
Only for ye livin' next door, we'd be in awful trouble, Winnie. With all Steven's health problems...
Since my Joseph left us...well, we couldn't've done it without ye.
They're brothers, Sarah. That makes us family.
What are the chances we'd live right next to each other? Of all the people and places in Brooklyn...it must have been fate or destiny or something like that, don't you think?
1930.
Haha! Let go!
Make me!
Stop roughhousing, you two! You'll hurt Steven!
I'm +cough, cough+ okay, Mrs. Barnes!

MARCH 18, 2026.
Are you hurt, Steve?
FATHERLANDVILLE, ID.
Steve, this is Vision. Are you hurt?

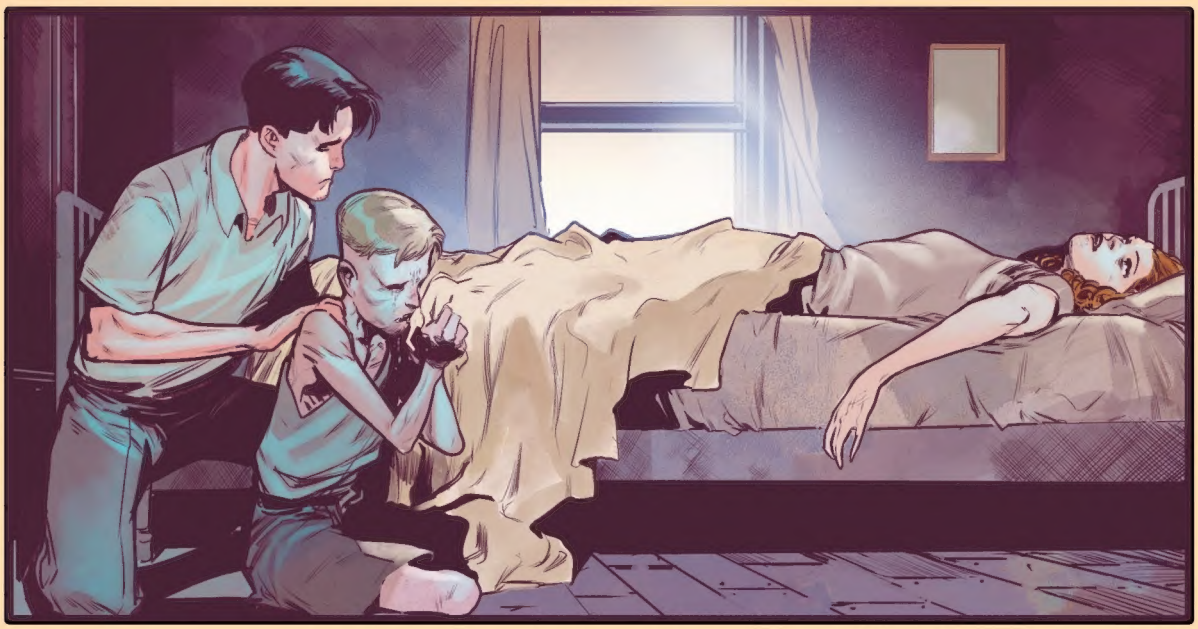
How many did we lose?
W-we do not know. Pietro brings in the wounded faster than we can count.
As of right now, 119 confirmed dead, 326 wounded. But expect that number to go up.
Cap... Cap...
Shhh, don't try to talk.
You're okay, soldier. You're going to be just fine.
Wanda, this is no place for a child. You don't have to--
For a long time, I...I believed I could only make bad things happen.
That is what Ms. Frost taught us at the school. But here, I make good things happen. Here, I am good.
D-don't tell me to leave. Please.
One thing I'm sure of: There is no limit to the good you can do, Wanda.
I'm very proud of you.


We almost made it that time. I think I saw a way--a path in. One more good push--maybe with some Avenger support--
My analysis differs.
From what I have observed, the Red Skulls have highly advanced H.A.N.D. weapons systems.
They have stockpiled sufficient rations and ammunition to hold out for many months.
It would be more efficient to shift your focus--and your troops--elsewhere...
You know better than anyone why I can't do that, Vizh. You were there...
This is bigger than our pasts, Steve. We are fighting for the future.
You have changed. The old you wouldn't have seen the distinction.
I can't stop now. Not when he...when the Grand Skull is so close.
That intelligence was old five days ago, when I received it. He might not--
With H.A.N.D. shattered, he's lost access to their teleport system. He's trapped in there. I know it. I can feel it.
Perhaps...
...but if so, he's guarded by ten thousand heavily armed men wearing babies as flak jackets, sitting on enough high-tech H.A.N.D. armaments to take a lot of Ultimates out with them.
There's a way around all that--
Call for you, Cap! Says he's an old friend!
Who is it?
He says he's the Red Skull.

ADVENTURE STORIES

The New York Times.
MAN ARMY ATTACKS POLAND;
IES BOMBED, PORT BLOCKADED;
NZIG IS ACCEPTED INTO REICH
The New York Times.

McCORELY'S OLD A
SINCE 1853



We meet again, Captain.
Do I know you?
John Walker, alias Red Skull, leads a small (less than 15%) breakaway faction emphasizing the messianic and apocalyptic elements of the Red Skull movement.
John Walker. Didn't recognize you without your face. I thought we killed you at Castletown.
John Walker did die that day--and I rose in his place! Reborn in the revelation of fire! It burned through the lie of my face to reveal the bone-red truth beneath.
Cartilage fizzed and popped in my ears like trumpets so that I could hear! My eyelids peeled back like burning tree bark so that I could see! My storied past! My glorious future!
I was John Walker. And Johann Shmidt. And Frank Castle. George Washington and Jesus Christ! To name just a few.
I am the second coming of the Red Skull!!!
Hmm. I think you hard-boiled this boy's brain, Vizh.
Listen, Walker, you'll get your turn, but right now I've got business with your boss.
The Grand Skull is not my master! He is a pretender! A false prophet!
I was sent by God himself to lead His people through the oncoming End of Days to the kingdom of glory! I would aid you in destroying him!
Use us, you mean, in your petty power struggle.
There is nothing petty about power or struggle, Captain. Have you forgotten?
It makes little difference. I have followers inside Fatherlandville. I have detailed schematics and a path to the Grand Skull with minimal bloodshed.

"Would you reject me and consign so many of your men to death on principle?"
All right, Ultimates. You know what you have to do.
Yes, sir!
Ready, Hawkeye?
To kill Nazis and dismantle a murderous force for white supremacy? That's pretty much why I got into this thing.
Pietro, you play the most important part here. I'm sorry to put you in this position. It's not fair. If there were any other way...
I want to do it. I can do it.
I know you can.
And call me *Quicksilver.* That's my Ultimates codename.
Ooooh, I like it!
All right, you all know the rules of engagement.
Protect yourself. Protect the innocent. The Grand Skull is mine.

Wish I could be there with you.
Me too, Steve. In case I don't come back... I...
I know, Buck. Same here.
...Steve?

Do you really think it's him? Your old friend?
I hope not, Charli.
"Now listen, Captain. Do exactly as I say.
"First, you'll need a diversion. The Grand Skull fears you. He knows you have super-humans. They do not.
"While their attention is focused on the north wall, you'll follow the map I've provided through the maze of underground escape tunnels...
You've been quiet, Cap. You okay?
Nothing...it was just Walker. The way he held himself, a particular intonation...for a second, I could believe it was really him.
Shmidt.
"...thus avoiding the combat drones, disintegrator beams, the Adaptoid array, the hypersonic ICMBs. Easy-peasy.
Hey!
"My men will be waiting for you at the entrance with disguises."
Hurry up and get these on!
We're not wearing those. You can go now.
I'd run.

Pietro?
I can do it!
I can save them!
I can save the children!
Let's punish them, Skulls! Show those Commies-- eh?
FFTT
ZZZRTT
ZZZRRTT
Nice try, Cap! I upgraded.

This is the end, Shmidt!
Steve! NO!

Steve! It's amazing the technology they have today, isn't it? Not like when we were kids...
ZRRRT
ZZRRRIT
ZRRRT
Take that mask off right now! Show me your face!
Make me!
KTANG
KTANG
KTANG
Gah!
GUH!
BOOM

BARNES
FOR
CONGRESS

Bucky... Buck, is that you?!
Surprised you recognize me. The years haven't been as kind to me as they have to you.
But then I actually *lived* them.
Bucky... how...why?
TEK
Why?! *Why?!*
*You don't get to ask me why!*
You've betrayed the people! Everything we fought for!
*I betrayed them?! Me?!*

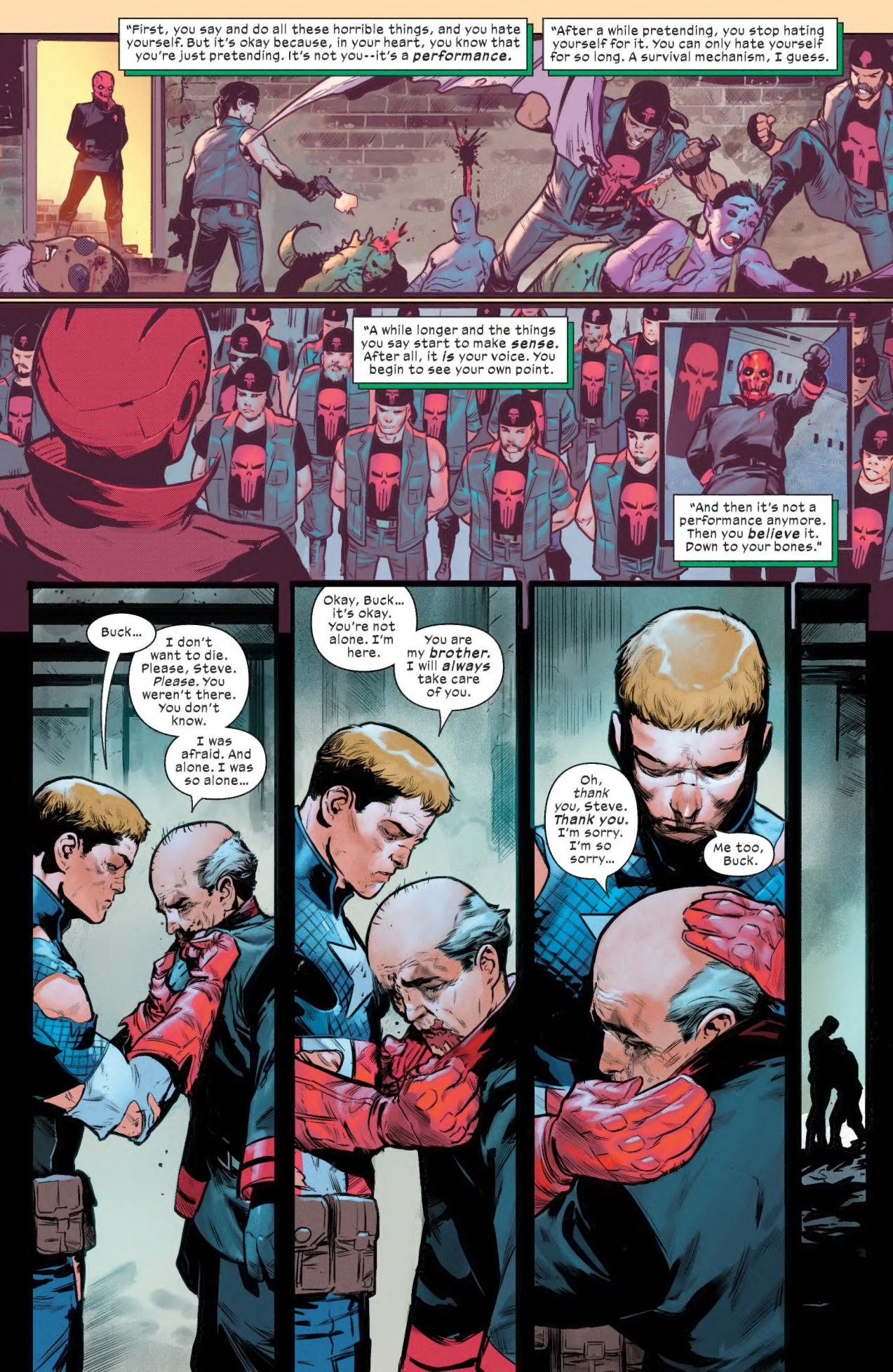
They took apart everything we fought for! You weren't even there!
"I was there! No one cared. They were happy. Celebrating in the streets!"
Happy INCORPORATED Day!
So you just gave up?!
Gave up?! I ran for Congress a dozen times--while there still was one. I tried to make a difference!
But government was already going out of fashion. The new thinking went there was nothing between people but self-interest.
Checks and balances, church and state, constitutions--they were all discredited, one by one. The whole democratic system was declared a failure.
"Unequal to meet the needs of the modern man."
TENK
TENK
The Maker was building a new world and there was no stopping it.
Then we die trying.

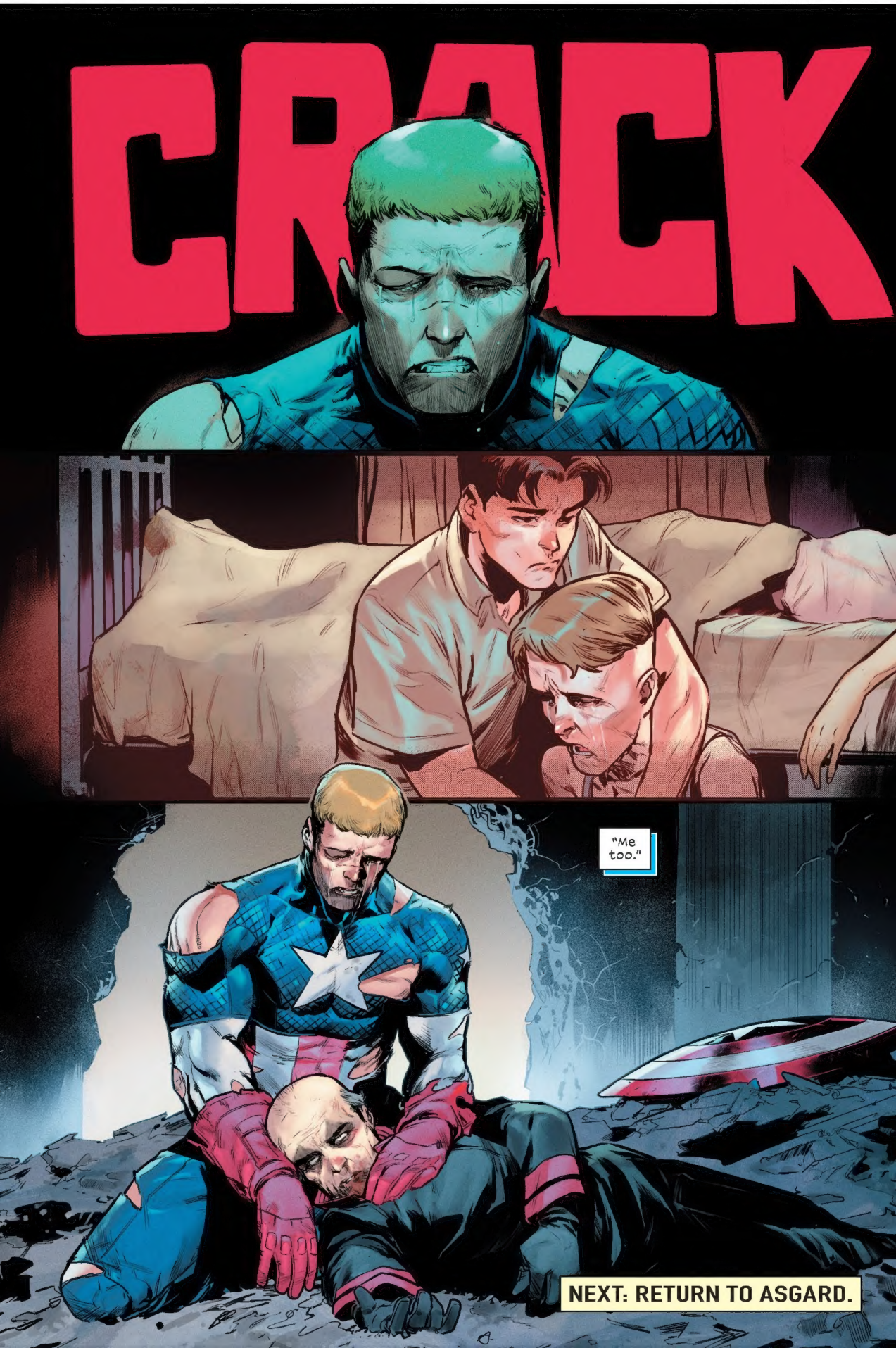
Same old line, *huh?* This thing has its own nervous system. 360-degree awareness.
You would have been ***proud*** of me, Steve. I refused to be part of it. Like I knew you would have.
CLUNK
I settled for a normal life fixing cars. But pretty soon the cars fixed ***themselves.***
CRACK
"Couldn't keep a job after that. I could never prove it, but I had the feeling I'd been marked. A permanent black spot on my record.
"Or maybe I just wasn't good for anything but killing."
CRKLLINKSH
The years ***fly by,*** Steve. *You can't believe it.*
KRUNK
Or maybe you can.

"One day I woke up and I realized I was going to die.
Liver failure?
I'm sorry. It's terminal.
"Soon."
Cap! I was a *hero,* Cap! I helped win the war! I lost *everything...* lost my country... lost *you...!* For *what?*
I could take dying for something. But I couldn't take dying for nothing.
I don't want to die, Fury.
You don't have to.
Let's get this old man a dose of the *Infinity Formula.*
Just like that-- they *had* me.

"It wasn't like I thought it was going to be, you know.
We need you to go long-term undercover and run them for us.
The Red Skulls? Is this some kind of sick joke?
Probably. But it's also an order. Straight from the top.
"I thought there would be tanks in the street, police at your door. And there were, for some."
But it wasn't like that for most. It was, mostly, the same as before.
Except we didn't vote. Hard decisions were made for us. People preferred it that way.
It doesn't seem very different until one day, you realize how different your life is. How much of yourself you've lost. Given away.
But by then it's too la--uhggh!
CRUNCH
Yeah, I guess it is.
Ugghhh...

Y-you can't kill me, Steve!
No? Why not?
Same reason I can't kill you. Because we're brothers. Because that *means* something.
And because my heart is connected to a large bomb by a *dead man's trigger.* If it stops beating, a room full of kids and pregnant women goes boom.
LUB DUB LUB DUB
"We were *warned* about that, Bucky. The women and children are safe."
*Sigh* Okay, Steve. Okay. You got me.
I don't get you at all, Bucky.
No? It's actually simple. So simple you can't believe it works that way, but it does.


"First, you say and do all these horrible things, and you hate yourself. But it's okay because, in your heart, you know that you're just pretending. It's not you--it's a *performance.*
"After a while pretending, you stop hating yourself for it. You can only hate yourself for so long. A survival mechanism, I guess.
"A while longer and the things you say start to make *sense.* After all, it *is* your voice. You begin to see your own point.
"And then it's not a performance anymore. Then you *believe* it. Down to your bones."
Buck...
I don't want to die. Please, Steve. *Please.* You weren't there. You don't know.
I was afraid. And alone. I was so alone...
Okay, Buck... it's okay. You're not alone. I'm here.
You are my *brother.* I will *always* take care of you.
Oh, *thank you,* Steve. *Thank you.* I'm sorry. I'm so sorry...
Me too, Buck.


CRACK
"Me too."
NEXT: RETURN TO ASGARD.

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